

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN BALINESE TRANSMIGRATION COMMUNITIES

A Case Study of Seputih Raman Villages, Lampung

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ABSTRACT

Over the past 45 years, the transmigration settlements which make up Seputih Raman in Lampung, South Sumatera, have undergone many changes. The changes to the villages of Rama Dewa and Rama Murti, occupied for the most part by Balinese settlers, show the persistency of the Balinese culture in determining the development of their houses and settlements. This paper examines the continuity and change in these two villages to understand the needs, perceptions and aspirations of the Balinese settlers in developing their environments. It reveals that the traditions and customs of Bali play a central role in determining the design of the settlers' houses and settlements.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past 45 years, since transmigrants began to arrive, the transmigration settlement of Seputih Raman in Lampung Province in South Sumatera has undergone some changes. All settlers arriving in Seputih Raman were provided with plots of land and standard houses. These houses were simple 5 metre by 6 metre wooden structures, divided into bedroom and living room. Corrugated metal sheets covered the roof, and the floor was earth. Making no allowances for any cultural aspects, these dwellings were intended as temporary housing only until the settlers were able to provide themselves with better accommodation.

Of the transmigration villages which make up Seputih Raman, Rama Dewa and Rama Murti villages are occupied very largely by Balinese. The changes these settlers have made reveal the tenacity of the Balinese culture in determining the form of the houses and settlements, which are very similar to traditional villages in Bali.

In this paper, we examine the economic, social, and cultural aspects, and the physical features of Rama Dewa and Rama Murti as compared to those of traditional Balinese villages, to gain an understanding of the driving forces behind the continuity and change in these two transmigration villages.

THE NOTION OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Rapoport (1969) posited that elements of both consistency and change are evident in a built environment. He argued that humankind has a 'biological' need for 'identity, security, and place', which is 'constant and essential', while perception and

behaviour, being culturally based, are changeable. This distinction between 'constant' and 'changeable' may help us to understand the form and function of both houses and settlements in Rama Dewa and Rama Murti. This then, allows us to identify the needs, aspirations, and perceptions of these Balinese transmigrants in developing their environments.

Bartelmus (p 23, 1986) defines development as :

... generally accepted to be a process that attempts to improve the living conditions of people. Most also agree that the improvement of living conditions relates to non-material wants as well as to physical requirements. Development goals that call for the increase in human welfare or the improvement of the quality of life reflect this argument.

Thus, development which changes patterns of activity in a built environment can be seen as examples of 'cultural change'. This notion covers educational and institutional development; agricultural development in the form of the introduction of new crops and farming techniques; changes in patterns of employment; and the availability of building materials. Nuryanti (1989) considers that in rural development, changes may be spontaneous; may be imported by settlers from urban areas, or by a foreign government or NGO development programmes; or may arise from the development of tourism.

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Habraken (1982) noted that changes observed in a site over a period of time may take the form of additions or deletions, or in change in the position of elements in the site. He argues that people are responsible for these changes, being armed with the power or control to make such changes. If this is the case, then the built environments on a site can tell us much about continuity and change.

To analyse the continuity and change revealed in the Balinese transmigration villages in Seputih Raman, we need also to describe the features of traditional rural villages in Bali, which themselves are undergoing the process of continuity and change.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL ASPECTS

As in traditional rural villages in Bali, most Balinese settlers in Rama Dewa and Rama Murti are farmers or are involved in agriculture-related activities such as processing or trading agricultural produce. Others own small home enterprises such as brick making, and in Rama Murti, traditional cast iron foundries (Sumarno, 1989). The Balinese farmers in Seputih Raman appear to be more successful than farmers of other ethnic groups (Kompas, 1988). This is because they are highly skilled agricultural practitioners, and even maintain the famous Balinese 'subak' irrigation association.

Unlike traditional Balinese villages, where the communal village space is commonly closed in by traditional buildings, the Balinese settlements in Seputih Raman display a more open arrangement in the form of a village square. This open square contains the village hall, market, shops and other facilities, indicating a shift from religious-oriented to economic-oriented activities.

The Balinese caste system based on the Hindu religion, comprising *Brahmana*, *Ksatria*, *Weysa*, and *Sudra*, continues to exist in the villages studied. So to are its attendant social functions, such as priest, farmer, blacksmith and so on. However, as the settlers are striving together under the same conditions, these castes are not so clearly defined. Also, unlike traditional rural villages in Bali, no difference is drawn between the castes for religious rituals, ceremonies, praying, cremations and so forth.

The organisational structure of a traditional rural village in Bali comprises a *desa dinas*, or administrative village, led by a village head, and a *desa adat*, or traditional village, headed by a *perbekel* (Hassal et al., 1989). In transmigration settlements the structure on the whole adheres to that determined by central government for transmigration settlements. Eradicating the *desa adat* has meant that the *perbekel* is now head of the hamlet, charged merely with assisting the village leader (See Figure 1).

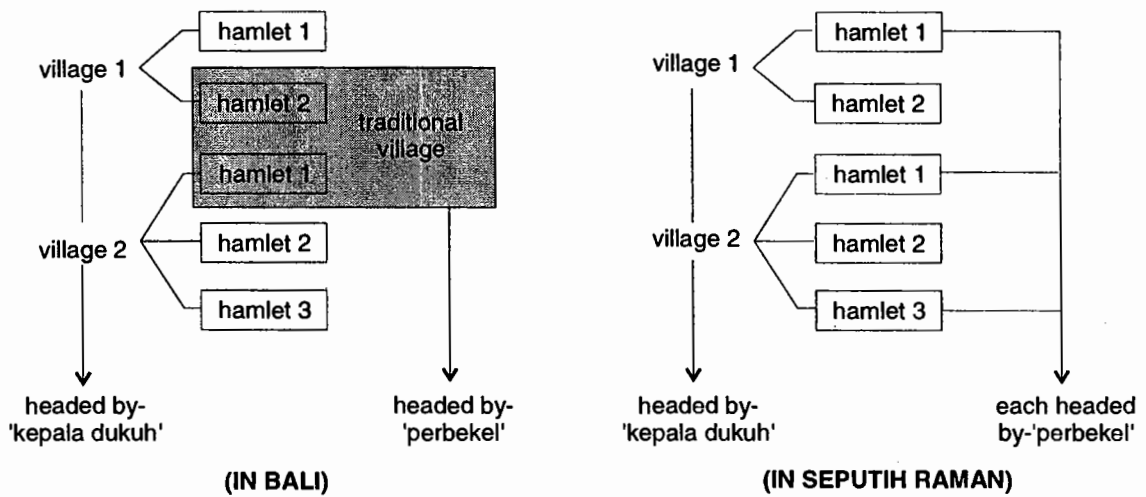


Figure 1. Village Organisational Structures in Bali and Seputih Raman

This is true in both Rama Dewa and Rama Murti villages which are made up of two hamlets each led by a village head, assisted by a *perbekel* as heads of the hamlets.

Although the role and function of the *perbekel* has been diminished in the transmigration villages as the government determined organisational structure takes precedence, the role and functions of other traditional leaders has been maintained to some extent. These include *kelihan adat* (the head of traditional activities), *kelihan banjar* (head of a section of the community), and *kelihan subak*, the head of the renowned traditional irrigation association. Even though the roles and functions of these leaders are somewhat diminished, it is clear that traditional customs and traditions prevail in these transmigration settlements.

Many traditional rituals and ceremonies have undergone change in the transmigration villages, perhaps because the settlements are not inhabited exclusively by Balinese. Some customs such as teeth trimming, birth and death ceremonies, and cremations have been retained, but they are scaled down versions of the costly ceremonies performed in rural Bali. These changes are reflected in the layout of the houses. One feature of rural Balinese houses, the *bale adat*, which comprises two rooms separate from the main house used to perform ritual ceremonies, is replaced in the transmigration settlements by a living room attached to the main house.

The Balinese language continues to thrive in Rama Dewa and Rama Murti, being the prime means of communication among the Balinese settlers, alongside Indonesia which is used to communicate with settlers of different ethnic origins. However, the large majority of transmigrants being Javanese, the Balinese language used in Seputih Raman has been modified by the extensive use of the Javanese language.

Balinese art forms remain evident in Seputih Raman, particularly those involved in rituals, ceremonies, and religious activities. Balinese dance, theatre, music, and calendar are also maintained, with trainers and teachers from Bali occasionally being invited to Seputih Raman. The quality and quantity of Balinese crafts however is in decline since few settlers work as craft workers, sculptors, or painters.

The Balinese in Seputih Raman continue to adhere to the Hindu religion. The concept of the three inter-related temples or *pura*, is the focal point of village development, dictating the geographical orientation of the village. This is evident from the

existence of at least three *puras* (*pura puseh*, *pura dalam*, and *pura bale agung*) in each of the villages.

The religious organisation, *Parisada Hindu Dharma* is maintained in Rama Dewa. Headed by the oldest villager of the Brahmana caste, this organisation arranges and determines all the requirements for the Hindu rituals, such as teeth trimming, cremation and so forth. The Hindu festival days such as *Galungan*, *Kuningan*, and *Nyepi* are also observed each year, and offerings to ancestors and spirits continue in the same way as in traditional Balinese villages. This could indicate that these religious systems are the cornerstone, or cultural core, of the daily life of the Balinese community in Seputih Raman, which identifies these villages as 'Balinese'.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS

- a) The villages : orientation, layout, and structure of the buildings

Studies show that the Balinese have conceived a basic idea of polarity, which they call *Rwa Bhineda*, and that the lives of the Balinese are built on a world of opposites: good and bad, positive and negative, sacred and profane, male and female, low and high and so forth (Boon, 1974; Dumarcay, 1987; Budihardjo, 1985; Eiseman, 1990; and others). This concept of polarity stretches from the heavens above the mountains down to the depths of the sea (see Figure 2).

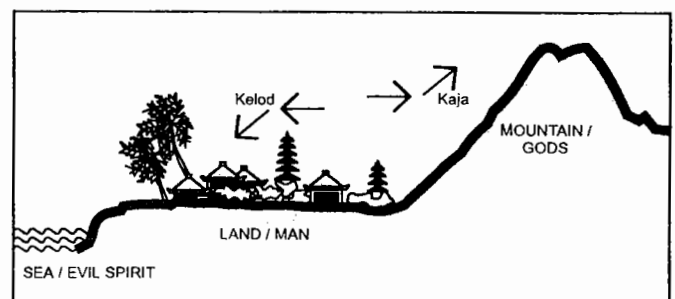


Figure 2. Balinese polarity, Rwa-Bhineda

Humankind is positioned between these two extremes, coexisting with both. The Balinese believe that the mountains are the abode of the gods, and the depths of the sea are where evil spirits reside. The middle world, or plains, is reserved for humans. This means that the Balinese strive to strike a balance

between these two polarities or opposing forces. So, the most sacred pole for the Balinese is the place of the gods - above the mountains. This direction is known as *kaja*. Since the upland area runs east to west across the centre of Bali, this direction is south for those living in North Bali, and north for those living in South Bali. Antipodal to *kaja* is *kelod*, the direction towards the sea. Whether north or south, *kaja* is always upward, and *kelod* downward. Most traditional Balinese villages are oriented along a *kaja-kelod* axis (see Figures 3).

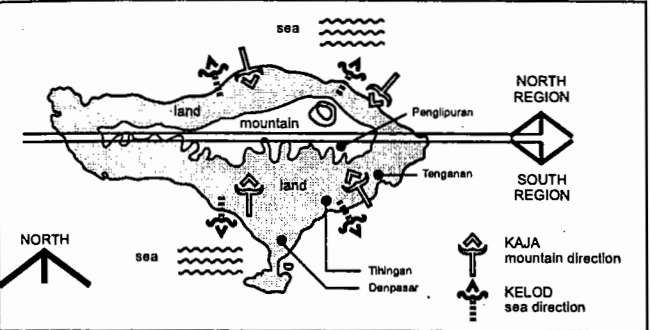


Figure 3. The kaja-kelod axis
(After : Sastrowardojo, 1987)

Tan Yong Djiet (1966) categorised Balinese villages into two types: the villages of the plains (*bali aga*), characterised by their *perempatan agung* or noble fourth layout; and the villages of the uplands (*bali dataran*), with their linear layout. Gelebet (1978), on the other hand, identified four patterns of traditional Balinese villages : *perempatan agung*; *swastika* or *taro*; linear; and nuclear (see Figure 4).

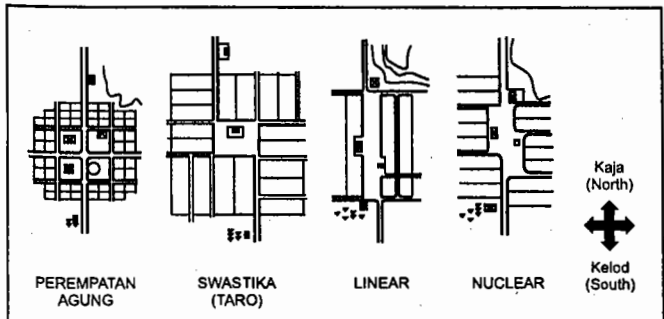


Figure 4: Patterns of traditional Balinese settlements
(Source : Gelebet (1978))

Because the settlers regard the traditional village as an architectural heritage passed down from generation to generation, the Balinese housing and settlements in Seputih Raman retain the characteristics of a traditional village in Bali.

Although the basic layout of the Balinese settlements in Seputih Raman remains unchanged from the original layout, some parts of the villages have been adapted to meet the religious needs of the settlers. The traditional noble fourth (Rama Murti) and linear (Rama Dewa) patterns of settlement which have developed in these villages may not be as marked as in traditional villages in Bali, because of a number of constraints facing the settlers when making these voluntary changes (See Figures 5 and 6).

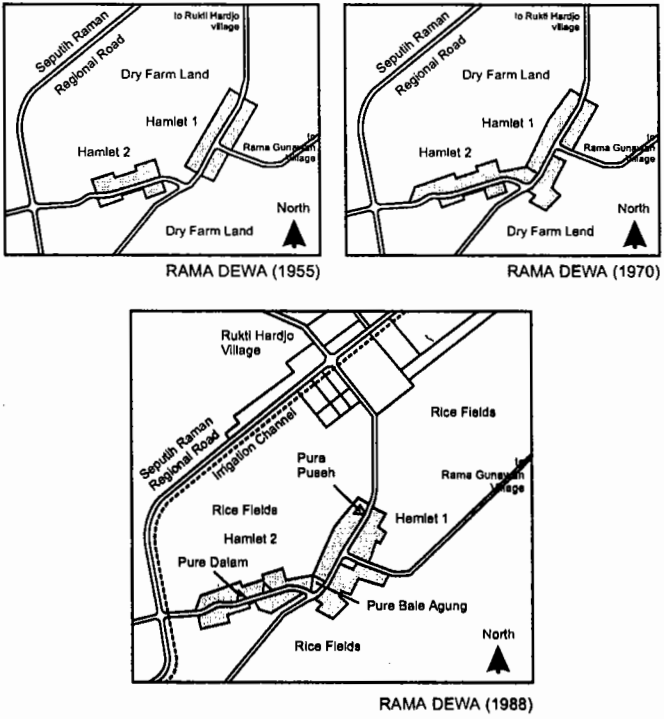


Figure 5. Evolution of Rama Dewa 1955, 1970, and 1989

Despite being so far removed from Bali and its sacred Mount Agung in a geographical sense, the Balinese transmigrants continue to maintain rules concerning village orientation. The directions of *kaja* and *kelod* can no longer relate to the uplands, but are still determined. The village axis and orientations are ascertained by the community organisation (*parisada hindu dharma*), working from other physical cues, such as a crossroads, main road, river flow, or hill and so forth (See Figure 7).

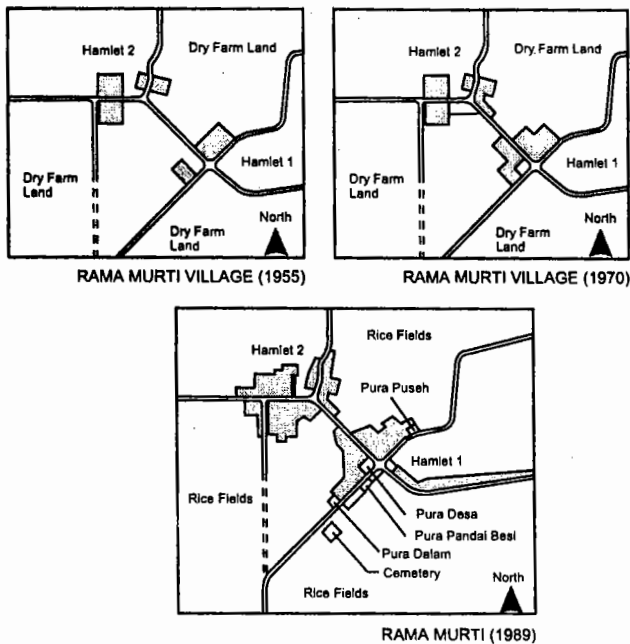


Figure 6. Evolution of Rama Murti 1955, 1970, and 1989

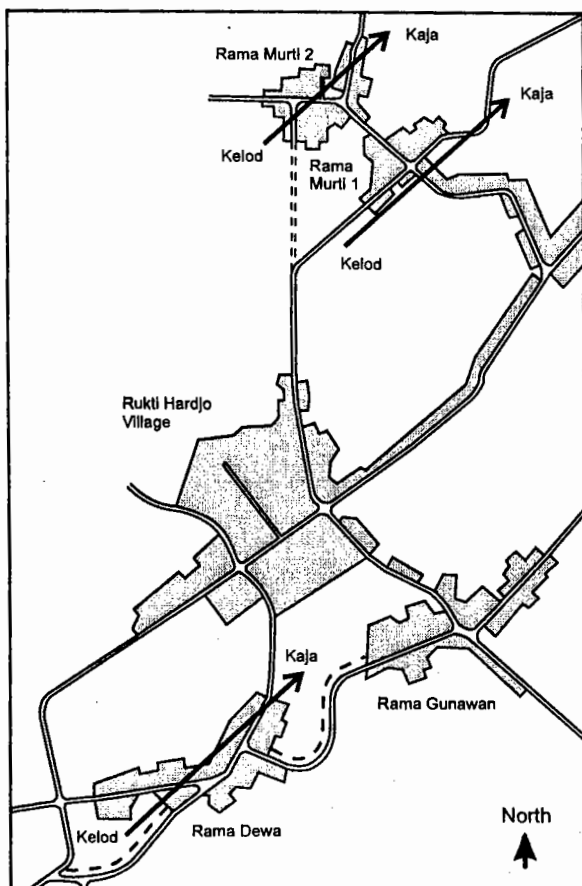


Figure 7. Orientation of Balinese Transmigration Villages

The plan of Rama Dewa is linear with the village axis following the main road. *Pura puseh*, the most sacred place, is in the north east of the village facing *kaja*. Semi-profane activities are carried out close to *pura bale agung*, which has been built in the village communal space. In the *kelod* direction is the cemetery with *pura dalam* close by (See Figure 8). As in rural villages in Bali, the communal open space is the centrepiece of the village, earmarked for religious activities. This space was subsequently developed for community or economic activities, housing Balinese community facilities, a village office, village assembly, markets, shops, and government buildings, such as a community health centre, and village co-operative unit. Other communal public facilities such as *bale banjar* and schools, occupy other village spaces in the north, where *pura bale banjar* has been provided. Unlike a traditional Balinese village where these community spaces and facilities are community owned, in Rama Dewa some are now owned by individuals.

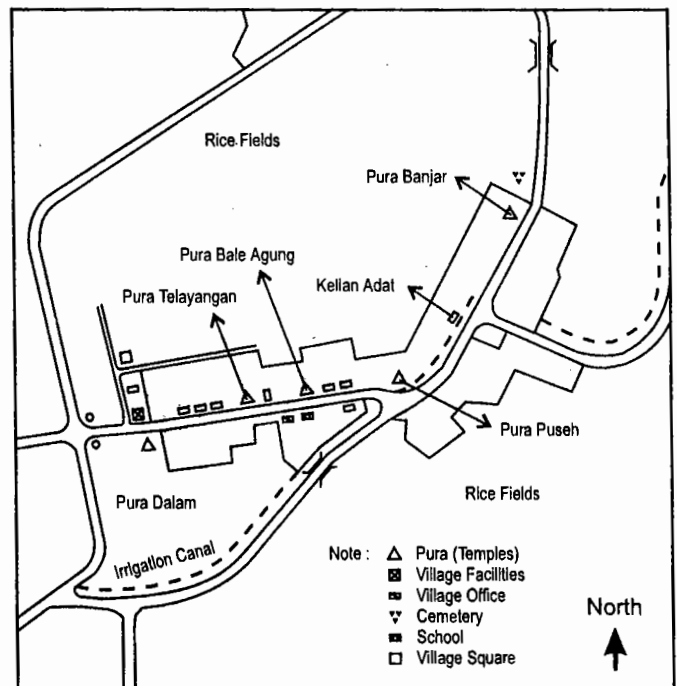


Figure 8. Plan of Rama Dewa Village in 1989

Rama Murti now follows the 'noble fourth' pattern of settlement (See Figure 9). *Pura Puseh* is situated in the north east (*kaja*) and the cemetery (the most profane zone) is around *Pura Dalam* (*kelod*, to the south west), on the road towards the district capital of Seputih Raman. In parts of the village which have many cast-iron foundries *Pura Pande Besi* can be found, for presenting offerings to the appropriate

spirits. The orientation is towards *Pura Puseh* and each part of the amalgamated village keeps to the *kaja-kelod* axis. As in Rama Dewa, the village communal space is now given over to economic or community related activities, with a village office, co-operative unit, health centre (clinic), school and market. There is also a public facility which is used for conducting social meetings, gatherings, and entertainment for Rama Murti SP. 1 and Rama Murti SP. 2, but this was built not as a specifically Balinese structure.

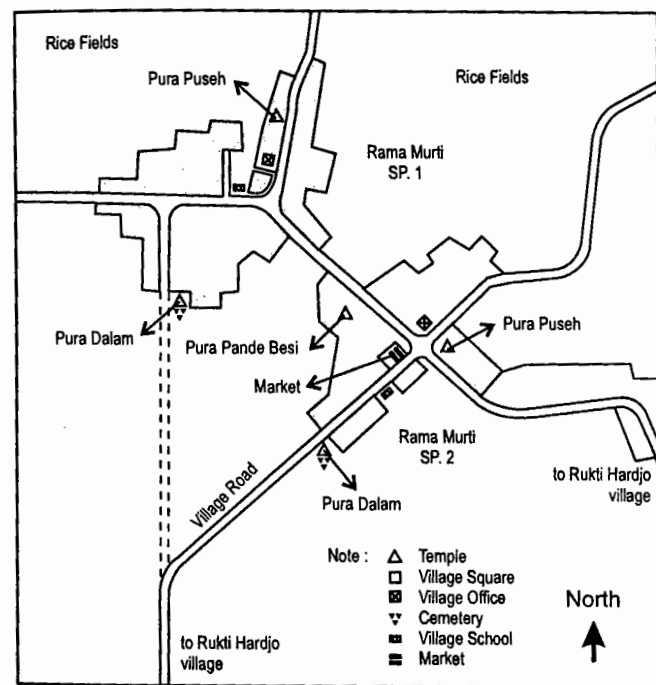


Figure 9. Plan of Rama Murti Village in 1989

In the villages studied, no particular village spaces and facilities were designed for the particular purposes of the Balinese. However, the Balinese transmigrants themselves have tried to develop spaces to suit the needs of their community. In particular, they have used the available village spaces to accommodate their religious activities. This is especially noticeable in the provision of *Pura*, shrines, *tugu* (small village shrines), *pengijeng karang* (small house shrines), and the like.

Marked changes have occurred in the structure of the buildings in the transmigration villages, and the building material used. The use of four separate wooden columns favoured for the main structure of traditional Balinese buildings has been replaced by concrete frames or bearing walls. Also, measurements based on body parts, such as foot, span and so on,

have largely been usurped in favour of metric measurements. The very distinctive use of local building materials left exposed, such as unplastered bricks, natural clay walls and so forth has all but died out in the transmigration villages. Modern industrial building materials are more often used nowadays, with local materials being used for granaries and kitchens if at all.

b) The houses : features, layout, orientation, and components

In addition to the *kaja-kelod* polarity, a further philosophy underlying every Balinese community is that of *tri hita karana*, or the three sources of goodness. This means that everything in the world is made up of three elements: *utama* (soul); *sarira* (body); and *trikaya* (power). From this philosophy the *tri loka* (three way hierarchy of space), and the *tri angga* (three rules) are derived. The architectural planning and design of traditional Balinese settlements and houses drawn on the concepts of *tri loka* and *tri angga*, with all parts divided into three components: *utama* (head or high); *madya* (middle or body) and *nista* (low or leg) (Budiharjo, 1985 : 67) (See Figure 10).

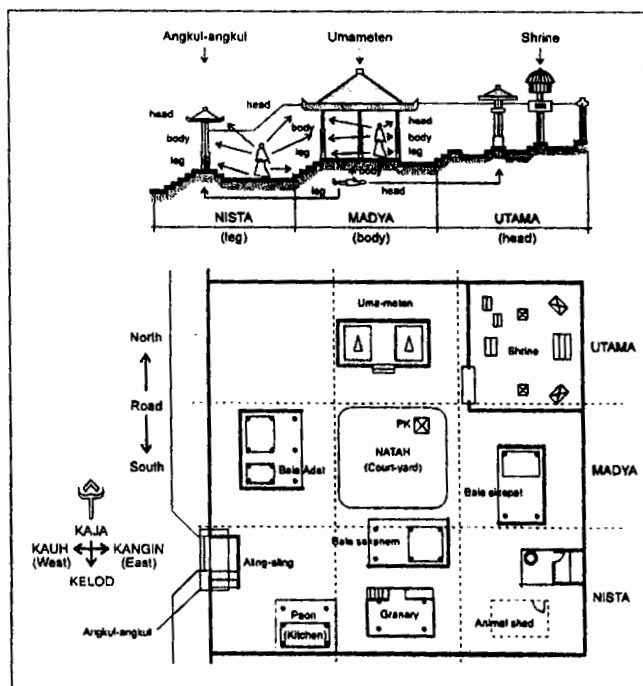


Figure 10. Translation of *tri angga* to the layout of traditional Balinese houses (After : Budiharjo, 1985)

Figure 11 below shows the orientation, layout and features of a traditional *bali aga* (upland) village, in this case the village of Tenganan. Orientation lies along the *kaja-kelod* axis, and the house is clearly divided into three zones : *nista*, *madya*, and *utama*.

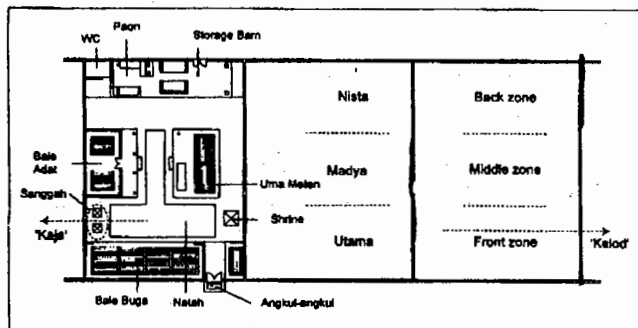


Figure 11. House plan and features in Tenganan

Figure 12 shows the plan of a house in Tihingan, a traditional *bali dataran* (plains) village in Bali. Despite some modern features, the layout and spatial formation of these houses are that of a traditional Balinese house.

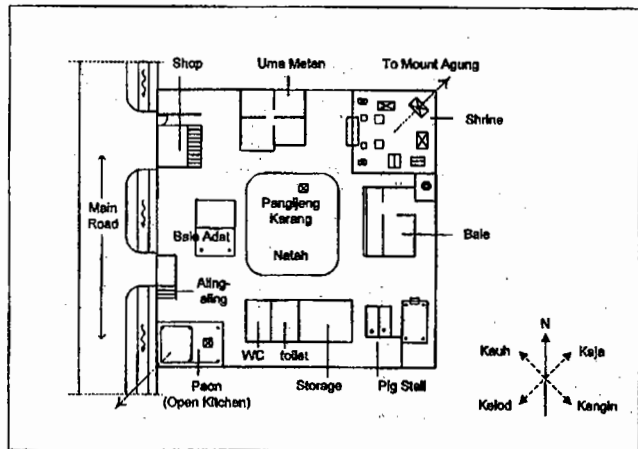


Figure 12. Plan of a house in Tihingan
Source : Anonymous (1989)

The plan and features of a house in the *bali dataran* village of Penglipuran are shown in Figure 13.

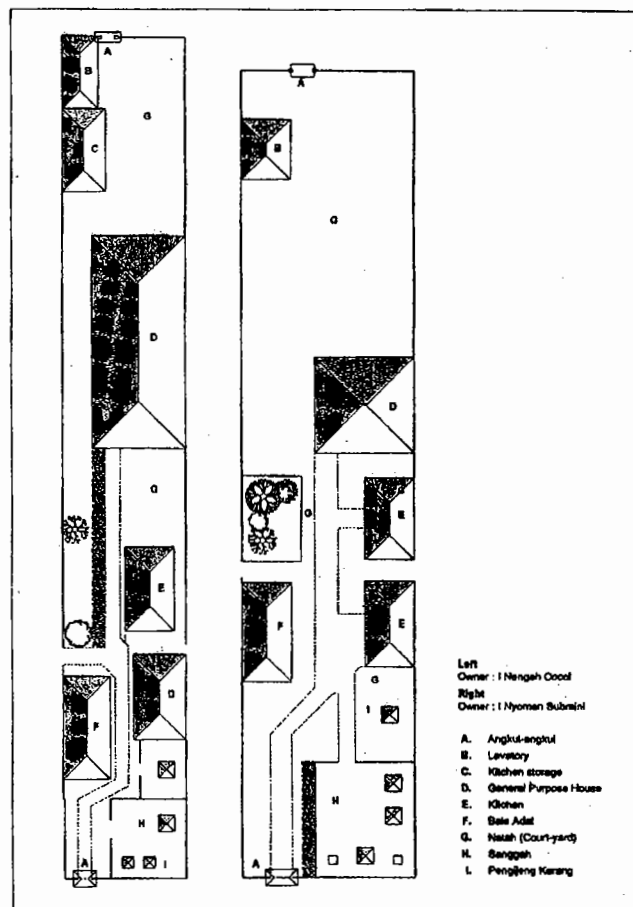


Figure 13. Plan and features of a house in Penglipuran
Source : Anonymous (1989)

In the Seputih Raman transmigration settlements the houses built to replace the original temporary structures are predominantly single buildings containing a living room (*bale*), a kitchen (*paon*), a dining room, bed-rooms (*meten*), and so on, rather than the multiple pavilions of Bali. However, many traditional features can be discerned in each house. The most obvious one is the *sanggah* (shrine) in front of the house, either to the left or right hand side of the house-yard (See Figure 14).

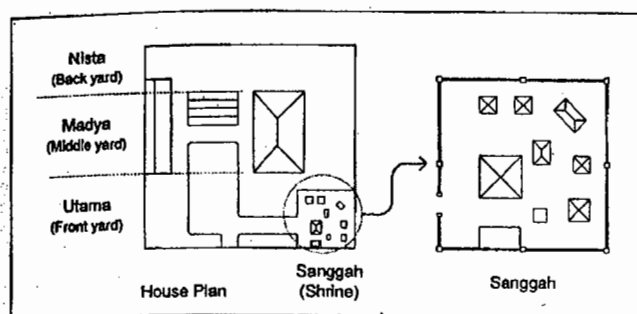


Figure 14. Plan of the sanggah

The house space covers part of a large plot. Its space is divided into the triple hierarchy maintained so assiduously in Bali: the sacred, the semi-profane, and the most profane spaces. This is shown by the locations of the shrine (*sanggah*) in the sacred area towards *kaja*, the main house in the middle area with *natah* (the courtyard) and *pengijeng karang* (small shrine) in association with it, and the house services, such as wells, toilets and pig-pen at the side towards *kelod*. The traditional features invariably exist but their functions and locations may be slightly altered from those in traditional Balinese settlements.

Within the semi-profane zone, the location and arrangement of the dining rooms, kitchens and granaries do not appear to follow any determined pattern. Many have the dining room and kitchen inside the main house, but some have a separate element joined to the granary. Other components (such as detached kitchen or granary) sometimes exist besides the main house, allowing some enclosure of the space used as the inner-courtyard (*natah*) with its shrine (*pengijeng karang*) to the "house guards". In Seputih Raman, the house inner-court (*natah*) is usually used for drying rice paddy. The *pengijeng karang* may be altered and located in front of the house. The rice storage granary is preserved as a feature in some houses and located near the *natah* and the main house. While these are arranged in more compact way than in Bali, probably for security against both burglars and wild animals, they are closely allied to traditional houses in Bali.

In a few cases, the arrangement is less clear because a kitchen, garage or shop has been built at the side of the house, reducing the sacredness of the front zone. Most of the houses have a high fence only in front, particularly for the shrines (*sanggah*). Usually on the left and the right sides, as well as at the back, are plants or cash crops which the government has suggested as sources of secondary income.

In both Rama Dewa and Rama Murti, *kaja* appears to be the direction towards *Pura Puseh* (in the

north east). The houses face straight towards the village main road but the internal house orientation, expressed by the location and direction of *sanggah* in each house, is towards *kaja* (See Figure 15).

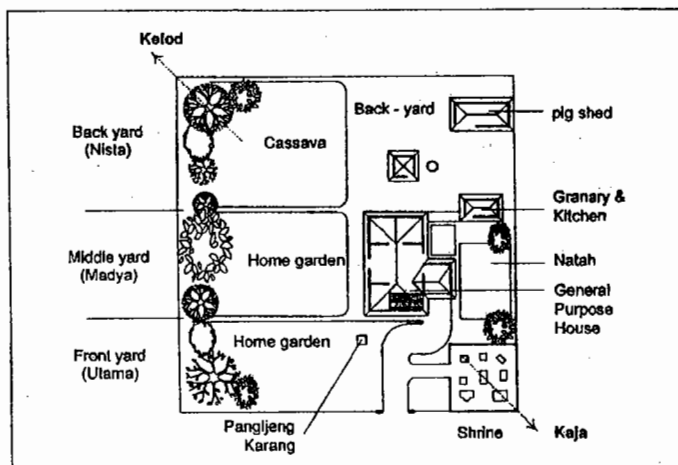


Figure 15. Plan and features of a Balinese Transmigration House

The houses in Rama Murti are slightly different from those in Rama Dewa. The yards do not have a high walls at the front but usually a hedge instead. Only the shrine (*sanggah*) is surrounded by a brick or cement wall emphasising its importance. In none of the villages is it usual to build a large entrance (*angkul-angkul*) as is customary in rural Bali.

CONCLUSION

Although no longer relating to the sacred Mount Agung in Bali, the *kaja-kelod* orientation of traditional villages in Bali is still apparent in the transmigration settlements in Seputih Raman which are populated primarily by Balinese. Traditional village patterns have emerged in these settlements (noble fourth in the case of Rama Murti, and linear in the case of Rama Dewa), and although not as marked as in traditional villages in Bali, these patterns are quite recognisable.

One marked change has been in the use of building materials: the traditional use of exposed local materials, such as unplastered brick, is very rarely seen in Seputih Raman, with preference being given to modern building materials.

While it can be argued that the spatial formation of the houses in the three villages differs slightly from that of traditional houses in Bali, perhaps reflecting a different life style or concern for security, the basic traditional concept is still recognisable in these settlements. Like houses in the *bali dataran* village of

Penglipuran, the houses in these transmigration settlements are divided into three distinct parts (*utama*, *madya*, and *nista*), as shown by the placement of *sangguh*, the main house, and the house services. Also, as reflected in the location and direction of *sangguh*, orientation of houses in the three villages in general remains faithful to that of traditional houses in Bali; towards *Pura Puseh*. In addition to the spatial elements, traditional Balinese ornaments decorate all parts of the houses, particularly the family shrine (*sangguh*).

Thus we can see that the traditions and customs of Bali play a central role in determining the design of the houses and settlements of the Balinese transmigrants such that they can still be recognised as Balinese environments.

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